

American pressures;
fanatic anti-Communism,
and an authoritarian
monarchy set the stage
for a coup d'etat in Greece.
Then a liberal premier
triggered the action.
An insider's report on

WHY THE ARMY TOOK OVER MY COUNTRY

By PHILIP DEANE

A WEEK BEFORE the army overturned democratic government in my country, a friend wrote to tell me the coup was coming. It was no secret; everyone knew the army's position, and no one knew better than I how active the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had been behind the scenes in Greek politics. The Americans may not have wanted the coup, but I watched them help create the conditions that brought it about when I served as secretary general to the King of Greece and later as minister of culture, appointed by Premier Papandreou.

The plotters were already talking about their *putsch* when I took up my duties at the palace in 1964. Three years before, the Greek Army had rigged the 1961 parliamentary elections in an operation bearing the code name "Pericles." I have read the plan of this operation; it was produced by Greek graduates of CIA political-warfare courses.

A very senior official, who would be thrown in jail if I gave his name, described to me what he had seen: "... In my village, the army gave weapons to right-wing goons. Known opponents of the right wing, not leftist mind you, just moderates, were called in by the local army commander and told that if the right wing did not win, they would be held responsible and the army would not be able to protect them. The goon squad was standing at the ready, to illustrate against whom the protection would be needed. In another village, the right wing got more votes than there were voters and this was a place where the moderates usually won ..."

A small pleasant man who looks nicely rumpled and talks as if he doesn't think you heard him, Lieutenant General Dovas was responsible for this rigging, as caretaker prime minister, and he was the man I heard most praised by American officials.

In 1963 Gregory Lambrakis, a member of the Greek parliament — a gadfly, an exhibitionist, a professional protester and close to being Communist — was beaten to death by a goon squad in full view of police officers who did not intervene. A Supreme Court investigation established these facts and even implicated the Greek police, stunning informed world opinion.

The stern-looking civilian premier appointed by the recent junta, Constantine Koliass, was chief prosecutor of the Greek Supreme Court at the time. He resisted, publicly and insistently, against investigating and prosecuting the police officers implicated in the killing of Lambrakis.

Such episodes had given the army and police tactics in Greece too much adverse publicity by the time elections were called again in 1963, and no rigging was attempted. The victor was George Papandreou whose party, the Centre Union, is the Greek equivalent of Canada's Liberals. He is a tall, theatrical man, nearly 80, who blossoms at the sight of pretty women and talks with an oratorical elegance unmatched since Demosthenes. He also is pro-Western, in favor of free enterprise and, in 1944, he crushed the first Communist attempt to take over Greece.

Papandreou believed that as prime minister it was he who should rule the country with the consent of parliament and that the king, like other modern constitutional monarchs, should be a ceremonial figurehead. But no king of Greece has accepted such constitutional restraints; like his forebears, the handsome and charming young King Constantine be-

lieved he, as king, should rule and not merely reign. In conversations with colonels who were later to take part in last April's coup, I heard their version of what an elected prime minister's proper place should be: "We should have a system like the Americans. The people will elect a congress which will have the right to approve or disapprove the budget. The cabinet will be appointed by the king and will be responsible to him. The president, after all, appoints his cabinet in the United States . . ."

The colonels thought that their version of the American system, with a hereditary king instead of an elected president, was an improvement because no politician would reach supreme office, ". . . and you know what politicians are." To convince Papandreu the politician that he should not challenge the king's supremacy, the army began threatening a coup. "The army belongs to the king like the king says," a U.S. naval officer serving in Athens remarked approvingly.

The next step was to dub Papandreu and his son Andreas "leftists" because they relaxed some of the draconian security procedures that existed in Greece, such as the need to produce a loyalty certificate before sitting for a university exam or to get employment, even as a charlady. The Papandreous also refused to let the police use clubs against peace marchers protesting the Vietnam war, for so long as they marched peaceably.

"The march must not be allowed to take place. It must be broken up," an American Embassy official told me, having tracked me down at a restaurant, late at night, / continued on page 36

even though I had told no one where I would be.

"How do you propose they break up the march?"

"I don't care how they do it. Your policemen know how to do these things — hoses, clubs. How do you think photos of peaceniks in Athens will look in the Washington papers at a time when American aid to Greece is being debated?"

Shortly thereafter I was appointed minister of culture and left on a special mission to Washington. My last conversation was with a friend in Greek Intelligence, who warned me that his people might compile a dossier on me, "proving" I was a man of doubtful loyalty if I showed too much zeal in serving Papandreu.

"You wouldn't let your staff do this," I protested.

"I couldn't stop them. They get more money from the Americans than I pay them."

I told myself that my record was clean and that I had nothing to fear. But then I remembered that the CIA chief in Athens had asked me whether I had ever collaborated with the Communists in Korea. The Communists had made me prisoner one day when I was wounded at the front six times, reporting for the London *Observer* on the initial retreat in the first month of the Korean war.

They tried to brainwash me, once

keeping me tied up day and night. But I converted my brain-washer, who later defected to the West and reported on my resistance under pressure. The late John Foster Dulles used to talk about the problem I had been for the Communists. Obviously, the CIA man in Athens had heard none of this.

"Collaborated how?" I asked him.

"You broadcast Communist propaganda."

"Who says?"

"One of our best Greek sources. He says he has tapes."

"He can't have because I did not broadcast anything from Korea," I said. "Besides, Washington has a list of all those who did broadcast for the Communists in Korea. I'm not on the list."

Some days later, I met the CIA chief at a party and asked him if his "Greek source" had produced the tapes of my alleged broadcasts. The answer was no. Even so, a whole year later, one Nikos Farmakis on a visit to the U.S. paid for by the U.S. government was telling all who would listen that I had broadcast for the Communists in Korea, claiming he had tapes to prove it. But he never was able to produce these tapes. When the colonels seized power in Greece last April, Nikos Farmakis emerged as their spokesman.

To Washington: warnings

Farmakis's calumnies were no doubt designed to diminish my effectiveness in Washington where I was working for the government of George Papandreu. Reports from American officials in Athens were pouring in, alleging that Prime Minister Papandreu was disrupting the army, Greece's bulwark against Communist agitation or worse. There also were reports of what would be done to Papandreu in retaliation. Washington is a town of many leaks. I soon learned what was afoot and on two occasions in the spring of 1965 I flew to Athens to give the prime minister details of what was being plotted against him. I told him that Colonels Papadopoulos and Pattakos (the leaders of April's *putsch*) had prepared a careful plan for a coup to overturn democracy if Papandreu continued his "disruption" of the army.

Proof of this disruption, the public was told, was ASPIDA, which means shield, a "Communist" conspiracy within the officer corps. Papandreu's son, Andreas, was supposed to be the leader of this conspiracy. ASPIDA, in fact, was no more than a band of officers who felt they had been denied

ment that had preceded Papandreou's. These disgruntled officers formed a sort of guild to plead for the redress of their grievances.

Papandreou tried to block the coup that had been prepared against him by personally assuming the Defense portfolio. The king refused to allow this and forced Papandreou to resign. The kings of Greece actually say the army belongs to them. Constantine protected his officers from the wrath of a prime minister who did not like being threatened with army coups.

So Papandreou was out, replaced by a series of puppet governments appointed by the palace. But how was he to be kept out? Army officers allegedly connected with ASPIDA were court-martialed for treason in a trial reminiscent of Fidel Castro's juridical extravaganzas. The pluckier defendants protested in court that they had been made to sign untrue statements under duress. No proof was adduced of any complicity by Papandreou's son, who was not himself in the dock thanks to his parliamentary immunity.

Naturally, this travesty of justice increased the popularity of the Papandreous, father and son. In parliament they managed to manoeuvre so no palace-appointed government could stand. Papandreou, after all, had won a majority of the votes at the polls and he demanded that he either be given the premiership again or that new elections be held. Elections were eventually set for May 28, 1967; and since it was apparent that Papandreou would win, the colonels struck.

That Greece could so move away from freedom when even Communist countries are moving slowly toward freedom, is, in fact, a result of Communism. After World War II Communist guerrillas, helped by Stalin's satellites, tried to take over Greece in a savage conflict that lasted five years.

This was a formative struggle, the first exercise in containment, and it established patterns that can be detected in all subsequent efforts to halt Communism. Communism threatens not only the body but also the soul of a nation. The main threat is subversion by men who feel no doubt about the rightness of their Communist faith. Defense against them demands, above all, loyalty, also free of doubt. That is why we have seen the rise of such aberrations as McCarthyism, or the John Birch Society and their less vocal varieties which are so widespread among military and intelligence personnel.

Conflict, says Senator William Fulbright, "is a great leveler. The longer it goes on, the more indiscriminating people become in their choice of weapons; the more they find it necessary to set aside principle for the sake of principle; the more, therefore, antagonists come to resemble each other."

Fighting the Communists side by side, Greek loyalists and their American advisers were shaped by this fight. They came to distrust dissent or debate. Ends, not means, mattered. That this is an extremist philosophy, Left or Right, was the sort of remark the Greco-American cold warriors did not care to hear. They were not interested in philosophies but in the hard facts of war, they said, and they were not prepared to have their careful plans disturbed by meddling, elected politicians. What the cold warriors wanted was a guarantee that they would be allowed to suppress Communism — forever, of course, since it threatens forever, in their view.

In Greece, for the cold warriors — American as well as Greek — what guaranteed that they could go on crusading forever, in their way, was the right of the king to rule rather than reign — rule by being able to call on the army which belongs to the monarchy, not to the people.

Thus, during their fight against Communism, the Greek armed forces, their local American advisers, and the monarchy developed an interlocking relationship: the king protects the ideological makeup of the army; America finances the army to the tune of \$80 million a year; the army, by threatening a coup, enforces the king's right to protect the army's ideological makeup. This relationship was born of the cold war and has continued despite the thaw. It suits everyone concerned, especially American officials in Greece because the army, by virtue of its unquestioning anti-Communism and its dependence on U.S. military aid, is always pro-NATO, pro-containment. The U.S. Embassy need not fear having to tell Washington of any unpleasant surprises in Greece. And if only Greek politicians would play along, they could be prime ministers with all the trappings of office.

A familiar saying is that power corrupts. But so does powerlessness.

Greek political life cannot have much dignity when the prime minister and his aides know that winning elections is not enough and that to survive in office they must curry favor with the army, the U.S. Embassy and royal courtiers.

When I was the king's secretary general, prominent political men sought me out, urging me to tell the king they were on his side. Some would be more specific and name the portfolio they hoped to get when Papandreou fell . . . perhaps I could mention it to the king. Others still, sensing which way the wind was blowing, simply talked to me at length about Papandreou's defects, hoping I would report their views to my royal master. A few even went so far as to try discreet bribery, by offering to lease me veritable mansions for the price of an efficiency apartment.

Conversely, one of the Greeks best qualified for high office says he sees no purpose in entering politics when Greek politicians are effectively powerless, since they operate under the constant threat of an army coup. Many qualified Greeks feel this way and stay out of public life. Those who enter it find themselves, more often than not, forced into demeaning compromises. And to these compromises, the colonels who cause them can point as justification for seizing power; the vicious circle is complete.

The Greek case is not unique. There are many others in less developed countries which receive massive American aid: South Korea, South Vietnam, Thailand, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and a slew of Latin-American republics. The citizens of these countries, if they are informed, may agree with me that America is still better than Russia or China, which is faint praise and damning too, for the land of Jefferson and Lincoln. ★

Philip Deane knows Greek affairs from inside. He was born in that country, son of a general who is the nation's most decorated soldier. Deane graduated from England's Royal Naval College, served in the Royal Navy (where he himself collected 11 decorations). As a London Observer correspondent from 1948 to 1961 his experiences included being taken prisoner in the Korean war. In 1964 he returned to Greece and was appointed minister of culture and secretary general to King Constantine. (Photograph above shows Deane and his wife on their way to attend the king's wedding to Princess Anne-Marie of Denmark in that year. Deane now lives in Toronto where he serves as foreign affairs analyst for the Toronto Star and as columnist for La Presse of Montreal.)